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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 007286

SIPDIS

NSC STAFF FOR POUNDS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/15/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPT: REALIZING PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

REF: A. CAIRO 7189 (NOTAL)

[B](#). CAIRO 7155

[C](#). CAIRO 7045

[D](#). CAIRO 6418 (NOTAL)

Classified by Charge d'Affaires Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) Building on specific ideas outlined in ref D, and in keeping with the overall approach presented in ref C, Embassy Cairo is working on a series of practical measures that can be taken to improve the transparency of Egypt's upcoming parliamentary elections, expected in three stages in November. Our activities include:

[A](#). Lobbying for GOE invitations to international observers:

-- As discussed in ref A, we are continuing to reach out to key decision makers to urge that Egypt reconsider its opposition to the participation of international observers;

-- We are arguing that such invitations (issued in a timely fashion) will automatically raise the international credibility of Egypt's process, while forgoing this opportunity will necessarily detract from Egypt's standing on the world stage as an emerging democracy;

[B](#). Expanding support for domestic monitors:

-- The role of Egypt's domestic election monitors is one of the success stories of the September 7 presidential election;

-- The monitoring groups (with USG-funded technical support and direct grants to offset costs) provided important data and observations on the process, and were largely accepted by the public and even regarded by the GOE as playing a positive role.

-- The groups are poised to reprise and expand their activities in observing the parliamentary polls and USAID, MEPI and the grantees are currently working intensely with domestic groups to ensure they have the capacity and resources they need to get the job done.

[C](#). Ramping up voter information programs:

-- An important shortcoming of the September 7 process was the confusion of voters over where, when, and how to vote. USAID, grantees, and Egyptian partners are working to develop materials that can be easily and widely disseminated to provide as many Egyptian voters as possible with clear and concise information.

[D](#). Pressing for clear and timely information:

-- Key to the success of point C will be the willingness of the parliamentary elections commission (which has yet to be constituted) to provide the public and participating political parties with information on the location of polling stations and clear (and consistently enforced) i.d. requirements and procedures for out-of-town voters.

-- We will be pressing the GOE on the need for such information, and will communicate this to the elections commission, once it is activated.

[E](#). Moving polling places out of police stations:

-- The Ambassador enlisted the support of Interior Minister Adly (ref B) for the concept of moving those polling places currently located in police stations to more politically neutral locations. We will continue to make this point to other GOE interlocutors.

[F](#). Offering technical support on ink:

-- A significant, though easily corrected, flaw in the Sept. 7 election was the use by many polling stations of ink that proved to be easily removed.

-- We will offer to the parliamentary elections commission technical support and consultations on inks that meet

international standards;

**G.** Ensuring polling places are free from partisan personnel and materials:

-- Most if not all polling places on September 7 were draped with pro-Mubarak posters and banners, hung by enthusiastic NDP operatives whose presence was felt in and around virtually every site.

-- We will press the GOE to ensure that all sites are completely free of partisan materials and to limit the role of party representatives. Taking this step would mark a significant improvement over past elections, a point we will be highlighting in our discussions with the Egyptians.

**H.** Replacing existing ballot boxes with transparent ones:

-- Clear plastic ballot boxes have become the international standard and have both practical and symbolic benefits.

-- We will offer to facilitate the GOE's acquisition of such boxes (including looking for other possible donors), which it will be able to use in the November parliamentary polls and in future polls.

**I.** Urging transparency in the counting process:

-- The parliamentary elections commission should direct judges to issue interim counts from their individual polling stations. This would greatly enhance the transparency and preclude opportunities for manipulation.

-- The transparency of the counting process would be even higher if domestic monitors were allowed to observe the counting;

-- We will press the GOE to get the elections commission to review counting procedures and seize opportunities to increase transparency.

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JONES